

Good deal: \$13 for 1 Ike dollar

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions from Tribune readers.

Q — In the last several years, I've accumulated about 100 Eisenhower silver dollars from circulation. This week, a currency exchange in Chicago is offering \$13 for any Ike dollar, any condition. Should I sell? — M.A., Deerfield

A — Eisenhower dollars made for circulation between 1971 and 1978 (including your coins, presumably) contain no silver, just copper and nickel. For five of those years, Uncle Sam also produced a few million silver Ikes for sale to collectors in special holders, not for circulation.

If someone offered me \$13 each for Ike dollars, I'd sell as many of the copper-nickel specimens as I could. Most such coins in uncirculated condition retail for less than \$2.50 in Chicago hobby stores.

Perhaps the currency exchange offered \$13 for any pre-1935 silver dollar; those coins each contain .76 of an ounce of silver. The special silver Ikes have one-third of an ounce of the precious metal.

Q — Does my series 1976A \$1 bill have any

value? The serial number is G78787878D. — A.N., Skokie

A — Yes! Such a repeating digit number might be worth \$15 or more to a specialty collector.

Q — I've got a most unusual \$5 "national currency" bill of series 1929. It says in large letters, "The First National Bank of Chicago will pay to the bearer on demand five dollars." I always thought only the government could print money. — D.F., La Salle

A — Before 1935, any nationally chartered bank could issue its own paper money if the bank had on deposit with the federal government a certain number of government bonds. The bills — known as national bank notes or national currency — looked much like other paper money of the day because Uncle Sam printed them.

Your item retails for about \$25 in "very fine condition."

Q — Which Chicago banks will sell me rolls of uncirculated 1981 cents and nickels fresh from the mint? I'd like to salt away several rolls as a long-term investment. Do you think that's smart? — B.N., Elgin

A — Banks don't normally sell rolls of uncirculated coins to collectors, but some hobbyists manage to obtain such coins from friendly tellers.

The government will produce huge quantities of 1981 cents and nickels; it may be years before the uncirculated specimens are worth much more than face value. There are better coin investments.